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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 001745

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [MARR](#) [FR](#) [GG](#) [RS](#) [EU](#) [UN](#)
SUBJECT: MORE FROM EU SPECIAL REP FOR GEORGIA AND FRENCH
MFA ON NEXT DIPLOMATIC STEPS

REF: USEU BRUSSELS 1430

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: EU Special Representative for the Georgia Crisis Pierre Morel took a few minutes from intensive preparations for the EU/Central Asia forum to discuss his thinking about preparations for the mid-October Geneva meeting on Georgia. As noted in reftel, he plans to visit New York and Washington next week and will make the rounds, including Moscow and Tbilisi, to firm up a coordinated EU position. He took on board many of our concerns but stressed the need to work with the Russians despite their hard line and the "brutality" of recent events. In this context, Morel described his activities more as the start of a process toward a conference that would constitute the start of a "conversation." Consultations would be intense and difficult, particularly among EU member states. The impending EU/Central Asia forum will be an initial test of attitudes in this "new phase," with the Russians seeking recognition of the new reality in Georgia and the breakaway regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He complained about recent critical remarks about EU-led efforts attributed to NATO SYG Hoop de Scheffer as "friendly fire" we need to avoid to prevent a weakening of EU efforts and a strengthening of Moscow's position. The French MFA, meanwhile, has stressed pragmatism and results as the guiding principles for the October 15 meeting on Georgia. End summary

Using EU/Central Asia FM Meeting to Underscore Resistance to Russian Pressure

¶2. (C) Further to reftel, DCM, Polmincouns, and poloff met briefly September 17 with EU Special Representative for the Georgia crisis Pierre Morel, who apologized as his cellphone rang every few minutes with calls related to the EU/Central Asia ministerial forum to begin the next day. He explained that, even as he was working furiously to set up his new EU operation, he was heading up the logistical effort for the Central Asia forum. Amplifying what he told EUR DAS Merkel

in Brussels, Morel repeated that he would depart for New York at week's end for consultations at the UN related to Georgia followed by a swing through Washington September 24-25. He apologized for not speaking more substantively while he was still setting up his mission, but he indicated his hope that the Central Asia forum would help accelerate preparations for the October conference on Georgia since it would be an occasion to speak with representatives of all the key former Soviet republics. With respect to the forum, Morel stressed that it was not intended to chart a new course but be very much a continuation of the line on EU/Central Asia collaboration elaborated during the German EU presidency.

13. (C) Morel opined that one "failure" the Russians had experienced recently related to the reaction of Central Asian states. The "shock" of the recent conflict with Georgia had, in his view, proven too much even for countries that normally supported Moscow's line like Kazakhstan. Morel was uncertain how to exploit this, however, given the uncompromising Russian line. He predicted that, especially if Russia complies with all its obligations to withdraw to positions held on August 7, Moscow will renew its pressure on neighboring states and others to recognize the new reality in Georgia and of the breakaway regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As we move into this new phase of confrontation, Morel continued, the EU will call for restraint and moderation but expects the Russians to resist. "The battle is just beginning," he warned.

Next up: Geneva & Discussion8

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14. (C) Turning to preparations for the Geneva discussion (Morel stressed that it is not a &conference8 but rather the beginning of a conversation), Morel said that "intense consultations are needed," and he noted the timeliness of the UNGA gathering of senior officials in New York next week. His goal was to have some sort of "model" for the negotiation process/mechanism to include mundane but crucial details like the attendees, conference room and shape of the table. When DCM noted USG concerns about such arrangements and representation of the enclaves, Morel replied that he understood fully but argued that we must nevertheless "figure out how to work with the Russians." He called EU "concertation" with Russia crucial but an "uphill battle." Clearly unwilling to say too much at this preliminary stage, Morel asserted that the process for organizing the discussion needed to be open in terms of its methodology and not seek to answer the many questions immediately but allow for some give-and-take. He has been working closely with Finnish FM and OSCE president Alexander Stubb; he referred to them as the &trio8 and stressed their commitment to territorial integrity. Morel was also mindful of the need to balance Russian preoccupation with the situation in the Balkans with the "brutality" of the recent situation in Georgia. He affirmed his first priority as coordinating among EU members and to avoid the appearance of any "hidden agendas." As the EU worked, however, the challenge was to maintain a certain "rhythm" and to avoid getting bogged down. EU members, with a wide range of views and historical experiences of dealing with Moscow, needed to remain solid and think about the long-term shape of relations with Russia as well as the current crisis.

15. (C) Among elements in reftel that Morel repeated were his close collaboration with EU Special Representative for the Caspian Peter Semneby (a mission he saw as fully complementary to the one he was trying to carry out) and the six-month horizon for carrying out his work. He was firm that at the end of six months the Georgia crisis will be over or that situation -- and presumably his mission -- will have evolved into something else, like a "super crisis" Or a protracted process. As Morel agreed with our concerns about access to the deployment zones for EU and OSCE observers, he

contended that, despite its imperfections, we have a clear basis for moving to resolve the current crisis. His 8 1/2 years in Moscow, dealing with the USSR as well as Russia, gave him no illusions as to Russian sincerity or the difficulties we face. He believed, however, that the Russians accept the deadlines and understand what concrete steps and actions they need to take. We briefly discussed with Morel Russian proposals for some sort of informal meeting at the UN October 6 or 7 on Georgia. Morel asked that we keep him apprised of our thinking so that the U.S. and the EU might respond in a coordinated manner.

Avoid &Friendly Fire Comments, Please

15. (C) Morel briefly spoke about the NATO angle to the Georgia crisis and complained that reports NATO SYG Hoop de Scheffer had criticized the EU-brokered agreement on Georgia as flawed was the sort of "friendly fire" none of us needs. Although the SYG later sought to amend his remark, Morel continued, comments like these weaken the EU's position and only strengthen Moscow's.

A Brief Update on French Thinking

16. (C) In a separate meeting September 17, the French FM's Balkans/Russia/Caucuses adviser Isabelle Dumont shared the

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GOF's "very preliminary" reflections on organization of the October 15 conference, emphasizing that pragmatism and results were again the guiding principles. Stressing that Secretary Rice and FM Kouchner will have the opportunity to discuss the French suggestions on the margins of UNGA, if not before, she said that the conference could begin discreetly with political talks among representatives of the three international organizations on the ground (the EU, which will have deployed its observer mission by October 1, as well as the UN and OSCE). Member states of the organizations would thus not be represented directly. She noted that this would have the disadvantage of preventing direct U.S. participation, but noted that if the U.S. participated, Russia would also have to do so, in which case Georgia would also have to do so, raising the "trap" of the participation of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian representatives as well. Following the political discussions, which would not have a significant media component and might take place more informally over a dinner, more formal, technical discussions could take place at the Political Director level with all the member-states and, she quipped, the South Ossetian representative "drinking coffee on the side." Finally, Dumont confirmed that the donors' conference for Georgia will take place in Brussels.

17. (C) Comment: Morel was in Paris for this week but indicated that he would likely spend little time in Paris for the months ahead. Instead, it appears he will mostly be in Brussels, where he is part of "Solana's team" concentrating on Central Asia, when he is not traveling to New York, Washington, Moscow, and Tbilisi. He also emphasized that he will be spending a lot of time briefing other EU members to keep them as solid as possible.

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